

Dear TUMC Community,

June 30, 2017

My Farewell to TUMC has taken place slowly over a number of weeks and for me, someone who doesn't like good-byes, this has been painful but necessary. Releasing myself from my understanding as your pastor and inviting you to release me of the same takes time to live out in practice.

But first, let us be clear about what we are and are not saying good-bye to. We are saying good-bye to my role in your lives as pastor and spiritual leader. We are saying good-bye to the weekly connection and the joy of the regular opportunity of seeing each other grow in life and in spirit. We are saying good-bye to time spent in committee meetings, small groups, one with one pastoral visits, and the honour you gave me of accompanying you through your celebrations, joys and struggles. We are saying good-bye to my input into your life as a congregation. We are saying good-bye to this part of our journey where we have walked together. What remains, by the grace of God, is a path of friendship if it seems good to you and me and the Spirit who holds our lives in Her hands.

Every good-bye creates an opportunity for reflection on the things for which we are grateful and the things that we have learned by walking this part of the journey together. Many of those things were said at the farewell you so lovingly hosted for me. (If you would like to hear the program on that day, please feel free to contact Mike, secretary@tumc.ca, who will send it to you because I have asked that it not be made publically available on the web) But on that day if you recall, I didn't really have a voice and so I wish to write some of the things that I said or wish I had said that day.

First, what I learned from you or admire about you:
I learned not to be shy to share opinions.
I admire that you care deeply about each other - your relationships with the church and each other.
You listen well to each other.
You generally recognize that when conflicts occur they are part of life. Some of them need specific attention and some are just bumps in the road.

Second, these are my hopes for you:
that you know yourselves as a beloved community of God,
that you continue to grow in trust of God and each other – and to practice what that means,
that you continue to refine your ability to discern and name the work of the Spirit of God among you,
that you continue to be the strong and vibrant and healthy church that you already are,

that you get to know each other more deeply – so that compassion can flow, and that you live out the love and justice, peace and kindness to which you are called in your next season of life.

Finally, thank you for your words of affirmation, for the lovely and loving farewell service, lunch, and program, for the gifts – the Living Tree quilt, the communion chalice from TUMC's set and the planter of flowers from the children. I will treasure these things as well as the memories of my time with you.

And now mutually we go with God to whatever is in store for us next. Life is full of adventure and neither yours nor mine is finished yet.

May the Grace of God and the love and peace of Christ Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit sustain us now and forever. Amen

Love and in Christ,

Marilyn G. Zehr